

**One in four Canadian women  
is sexually assaulted. Most  
women live with the fear of  
being sexually assaulted.**

**People don't like to talk  
about it but as a community,  
we should all be concerned.  
No one should have to live  
in fear.**

**This pamphlet contains  
the facts about sexual assault.  
It will help us to understand  
and start talking about this  
serious problem.**



#### **What is sexual assault?**

Sexual assault is *any* unwanted act of a sexual nature imposed by one person upon another.

Sexual assault of any kind is a *crime*, even in a marriage or a dating relationship.

Statistics show that nearly all sexual assaults are committed by men against women or girls. A very small percentage of sexual assault victims are men.

#### **Is there a difference between sex- ual assault and rape?**

Rape is unwanted sexual intercourse.

Under the law, sexual assault is any unwanted act of a sexual nature, including rape and any other unwanted fondling or touching.

#### **Where does it happen?**

Most people believe that sexual assault happens in "dangerous" places such as dark alleys or parking lots. But *more than half* of all sexual assaults take place in private homes.

#### **Who is sexually assaulted?**

All kinds of women are sexually assaulted — women from every walk of life. They can be of every racial and ethnic background; rich or poor; homemakers or women who work outside the home.

Women of all ages and physical types are sexually assaulted, including elderly and disabled women.

It doesn't happen to any certain "type" of women. *Any* woman can be sexually assaulted.

#### **Who commits sexual assault?**

Most people think of sexual assault as a woman being sexually attacked by a stranger. But *more than half* of all sexual assaults are committed by men who are known to the women.

When a woman knows the man who sexually assaults her, it is less likely that what has happened to her will be seen as a sexual assault, even by her. She is also less likely to be believed.

But these sexual assaults are no less a crime than those committed by strangers.

Men who commit sexual assault are from every background — rich and poor; of every racial and ethnic group; and are in every kind of job and profession.

Men who commit sexual assault can be the husbands, partners, relatives, boyfriends, employers, co-workers, doctors, teachers or lawyers of the women they assault.

#### **Why does sexual assault happen?**

A sexual assault happens when a man thinks that his feelings and desires are more important than the woman's feelings and desires. This attitude reflects the fact that women have not yet achieved real equality in our society.

By committing a sexual assault, the man imposes his wishes on the woman by pressure, force or other means. His "right" to get what he wants is more important to him than her right to say no.

When a woman says no, many men don't listen. Some men think she really means maybe or yes. Some men even believe that women secretly "want" or that they "deserve" to be raped. This is *not true*.

Under the law, women have the right to say no to any form of sex or sexual touching, even in a marriage or when dating. No means no — whatever the situation.

#### **Who is responsible for sexual assault?**

People who commit sexual assaults are responsible for these crimes, not the victims.

What a woman wears, where she goes, what she drinks or who she talks to does *not mean* she is inviting sexual assault or giving up her right

to say no. These myths blame the victim for the crime, not the offender.

Any woman of any age in almost any situation can be sexually attacked. If a woman is sexually assaulted it is not her fault.

#### What can I do?

Recognize that our society has a responsibility to stop all forms of sexual assault. Sexual assault is a crime.

An important first step is to learn more about sexual assault and why it happens. Many of the things we have heard about sexual assault are not true. We need to think about our attitudes and challenge the myths. We must place responsibility for the crimes on the offenders and stop blaming victims. Talk to others about sexual assault. You can help men and women learn that women have the right to say no — and that no means no — whatever the situation. No one has the right to pressure or force any unwanted act of a sexual nature on another person.

You may know a woman who has been sexually assaulted. Listen to her. Let her know that it was not her fault and that she is not alone. Find out what help is available in your community and tell her. Give her this brochure.

#### What can I do if I've been sexually assaulted?

All women suffer pain and trauma from a sexual assault, even many years later. They may show this in different ways, or not show it at all. It helps to talk about it.

You might choose to tell someone you trust, such as a close friend or relative, or contact:

- a rape crisis centre or sexual assault centre
- a women's counselling service
- a hospital sexual assault care co-ordinator
- a teacher or guidance counsellor
- a health worker or your doctor.

In order for a criminal investigation to take place, you must tell the police that you have been sexually assaulted. A medical examination may be necessary — if so, it should be done as soon as possible after the assault.

Sometimes the people you turn to will not understand. There are others who do.

Remember — you are not alone and you are not to blame.

For more information, write:

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Toronto M7A 1N3**



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# SEXUAL ASSAULT

It's a crime.

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